

**279.68 Student progression — intensive reading instruction — reporting requirements — promotion.**

1. *Reading proficiency, assessments, parental notification, and promotion.*

a. A school district shall assess all students enrolled in kindergarten through grade three at the beginning of each school year for their level of reading or reading readiness on locally determined or statewide assessments, as provided in [section 256.7, subsection 31](#). If a student is not reading proficiently and is persistently at risk in reading, based upon the assessments administered in accordance with this paragraph, the school district shall provide intensive reading instruction to the student. The student's reading proficiency shall be periodically reassessed by locally determined or statewide assessments including periodic universal screening and annual standard-based assessments. The student shall continue to be provided with intensive reading instruction until the student is reading at grade level, as determined by the student's consistently proficient performance on valid and reliable measures of reading ability. For purposes of [this section](#), "*persistently at risk*" means the student has not met the grade-level benchmark on two consecutive screening assessments administered under this paragraph.

b. The parent or guardian of any student in kindergarten through grade three who is persistently at risk in reading shall be notified in writing and shall be provided all of the following:

- (1) A description of the services currently provided to the student.
- (2) A description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that the school district will provide to the student that are designed to remediate the identified areas in which the student is persistently at risk in reading.
- (3) Strategies for parents and guardians to use in helping the student read proficiently, including but not limited to the promotion of parent-guided home reading.
- (4) Regular updates regarding the student's progress toward reaching or exceeding the targeted level of reading proficiency.

c. Beginning May 1, 2018, unless the school district is granted a waiver pursuant to [subsection 2](#), paragraph "e", if the student is persistently at risk in reading by the end of grade three, the school district shall notify the student's parent or guardian that the parent or guardian may enroll the student in an intensive summer reading program offered in accordance with [subsection 2](#), paragraph "e". If the parent or guardian does not enroll the student in the intensive summer reading program and the student is ineligible for the good cause exemption under [subsection 5](#), the student shall be retained in grade three pursuant to [subsection 3](#). If the student is exempt from participating in an intensive summer reading program for good cause, pursuant to [subsection 5](#), or completes the intensive summer reading program but is not reading proficiently upon completion of the program, the student may be promoted to grade four, but the school district shall continue to provide the student with intensive reading instruction until the student is reading proficiently as demonstrated by scoring on locally determined or statewide assessments administered under paragraph "a".

2. *Successful progression for early readers.* If funds are appropriated by the general assembly for purposes of implementing [this subsection](#), a school district shall do all of the following:

a. Provide students who are persistently at risk in reading with intensive instructional services and supports, free of charge, to remediate the identified areas in which students are not proficient in reading, including a minimum of ninety minutes daily of scientific, research-based reading instruction and other strategies prescribed by the school district which may include but are not limited to the following:

- (1) Small group instruction.
- (2) Reduced teacher-student ratios.
- (3) More frequent progress monitoring.
- (4) Tutoring or mentoring.
- (5) Extended school day, week, or year.
- (6) Summer reading programs.

b. At regular intervals, apprise the parent or guardian of academic and other progress being made by the student and give the parent or guardian other useful information.

c. In addition to required reading enhancement and acceleration strategies, provide parents of students who are persistently at risk in reading with a plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in regular parent-guided home reading.

d. Establish a reading enhancement and acceleration development initiative designed to offer intensive accelerated reading instruction to each kindergarten through grade three student who is persistently at risk in reading. The initiative shall comply with all of the following criteria:

(1) Be provided to all kindergarten through grade three students who are persistently at risk in reading. The assessment initiative shall measure phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

(2) Be provided during regular school hours in addition to the regular reading instruction.

(3) Provide a reading curriculum that meets guidelines adopted pursuant to [section 256.7, subsection 31](#), and at a minimum has the following specifications:

(a) Assists students who are persistently at risk in reading to develop the skills to read at grade level. Assistance shall include but not be limited to strategies that formally address dyslexia, when appropriate. For purposes of this subparagraph division (a), “*dyslexia*” means a specific and significant impairment in the development of reading, including but not limited to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, that is not solely accounted for by intellectual disability, sensory disability or impairment, or lack of appropriate instruction.

(b) Provides skill development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

(c) Includes a scientifically based and reliable assessment.

(d) Provides initial and ongoing analysis of each student’s reading progress.

(e) Is implemented during regular school hours.

(f) Provides a curriculum in core academic subjects to assist the student in maintaining or meeting proficiency levels for the appropriate grade in all academic subjects.

e. Offer each summer, beginning in the summer of 2018, unless the school district receives a waiver from this requirement from the department of education for the summer of 2018, an intensive summer reading program for students who are persistently at risk in reading. The program shall meet the criteria and follow the guidelines established pursuant to [section 256.9, subsection 49](#), paragraph “c”, subparagraph (1), subparagraph division (g).

f. Report to the department of education the specific intensive reading interventions and supports implemented by the school district pursuant to [this section](#). The department shall annually prescribe the components of required or requested reports.

3. *Promotion to grade four.* In determining whether to promote a student in grade three to grade four, a school district shall place significant weight on any area in which the student is persistently at risk in reading. The school district shall also weigh the student’s progress in other subject areas, as well as the student’s overall intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development. A decision to retain a student in grade three shall be made only after direct personal consultation with the student’s parent or guardian and after the formulation of a specific plan of action to increase the student’s reading skills until the student is reading at grade level.

4. *Ensuring continuous improvement in reading proficiency.*

a. To ensure all children are reading proficiently by the end of third grade, each school district shall address reading proficiency as part of its comprehensive school improvement plan, drawing upon information about students from assessments and reassessments conducted pursuant to [subsection 1](#) and the prevalence of areas in which students are persistently at risk in reading identified by classroom, elementary school, and other student characteristics. As part of its comprehensive school improvement plan, each school district shall review chronic early elementary absenteeism for its impact on literacy development. If more than fifteen percent of an attendance center’s students are not reading proficiently and are persistently at risk in reading by the end of third grade, the comprehensive school improvement plan shall include strategies to reduce that percentage, including school and community strategies to raise the percentage of students who are reading at grade level.

b. Each school district, subject to an appropriation of funds by the general assembly,

shall provide professional development services to enhance the skills of elementary teachers in responding to children's unique reading issues and needs and to increase the use of evidence-based strategies.

5. *Good cause exemption.*

a. The school district shall exempt students from the retention and intensive summer reading program requirements of [subsection 1](#), paragraph "c", for good cause. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

(1) Limited English proficient students who have had less than two years of instruction in an English as a second language program.

(2) Students requiring special education whose individualized education program indicates that participation in a locally determined or statewide assessment as provided in [section 256.7](#), [subsection 31](#), is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of rules adopted by the state board of education for the administration of [chapter 256B](#).

(3) Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative performance measure approved pursuant to [section 256.7](#), [subsection 31](#).

(4) Students who demonstrate mastery through a student portfolio under alternative performance measures approved pursuant to [section 256.7](#), [subsection 31](#).

(5) Students who have received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years but who are still persistently at risk in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade one, grade two, or grade three. Intensive reading instruction for students so promoted must include an altered instructional day that includes specialized diagnostic information and specific reading strategies for each student. The school district shall assist attendance centers and teachers to implement reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers.

b. For students described in paragraph "a", subparagraphs (3) and (4), a request for a good cause exemption from the retention requirement of [subsection 1](#), paragraph "c", shall include documentation from the student's teacher to the school principal that indicates that the promotion of the student is appropriate and is based upon the student's academic record. Such documentation shall include but not be limited to the individualized education program, if applicable, report card, or student portfolio.

[2012 Acts, ch 1119, §34](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1077, §2](#); [2016 Acts, ch 1123, §2](#); [2016 Acts, ch 1132, §12, 13](#)

Referred to in [§256.7](#), [§279.60](#), [§280.29](#)

See Code editor's note on simple harmonization at the end of Vol VI  
Section amended